19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
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643 villages by the way. One of the most noticeable features of the activities surrounding Nyikang is the principle that he and his lieutenants are given, or take, what they want from Shilluk as they pass. This [173] embassy to the north may well have its origin in a raiding party, and the two sections, whose duty it is to perform this journey, may have been obliged to render this form of military service to Nyikang. Nowadays the silver and the cloth which were originally plunder, are [177] bought from Kosti with money supplied by the *reth*, and contributed [437] by Shilluk north of Kaka. Other requirements are ostrich feathers procured from the country round Kaka for the head pieces of the images of Nyikang and Dak, by the people of Mwomo, and ivory for bracelets to be worn by various functionaries at the installation itself. This was provided from the tusks of elephants slain by the Shilluk in 1938.[11] They are very rare in Shilluk country. Bamboo is brought from Fungor in the eastern Nuba Mountains for the bodies of Nyikang's image, and those of his sons Dak and Cal. This is brought by the [283] people of Akwobai. Certain sacred ropes made from the fibre of dom palms, which grow round Fanyikang, are brought by "Dak", who with his followers makes a special pilgrimage some two months before the ceremonies.

643 An obligation lies on the chiefs of Fanyikang to produce skins
324 of the female Mrs. Gray antelope from Fanyikang Island. These are
292 required as the high robes of honour of the *reth*. They are worn by the *reth* himself and all the important people in the ceremony. To be presented with a Mrs. Gray skin is a mark of the greatest esteem. They are royal game, and are only killed in the first year of a new *reth's* reign. On this occasion doubtless to save any complications with the government, which strictly preserves these antelopes, the operation was all over before the administration had word of it.

643 The houses of Fashoda had to be tidied up and new fences built,
356 but no new building in mud was done.

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[136] 11. In 1938 a few elephants invaded Shilluk country near Malakal, for the first time for many years.

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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463 824 [283] stalks of millet, binding them together with ropes which he makes of grass. The same grass provides him with the thatch for the roof, mats for his door, ropes of varying strength to tether his goats and cattle, and a rope of great thickness and strength to assist him in the dangerous sport of hunting the hippopotamus. From reeds gathered by the riverside he weaves grain baskets and fish traps. If a cow of 463 [232] his falls sick he can act as a veterinary doctor, and if he fails to effect a cure for the animal, he is quite competent at least to cure its hide! He makes his own pottery, beautifully [323] symmetrical and balanced, without the aid of a wheel, and fires it in an earth oven, and grows the calabashes which [415] provide him with drinking bowls. He can turn his hand to [294] shoemaking, fashioning a clumsy but serviceable sandal from [237] hippopotamus hide and cow skin by using his spear blade very cleverly as both knife and awl. When his work is done he will fill his home-made pipe with tobacco he has grown and cured himself and gratefully drink the beer that his able wife has brewed for him. There are, naturally, some among them who are more gifted than others, or who show a special aptitude in some particular craft and therefore specialize in it. Thus, a Shilluk householder who wishes to have a superior type of thatching on his house will call in an expert to do it; yet such experts are comparatively few, because they are unnecessary in a community where each one is brought up to do everything for himself, and has no other work to prevent him from living a communal tribal life in full. The one craft that is completely exercised by a special few is that [326] of the blacksmith, and this because ironwork is so small a need in the life of the Shilluk. It is true that his two spears [411] and the small hoe he uses for cultivation are indispensable [412] to him, but once he acquires them they last a lifetime, and it would be a waste for him to collect the—to him—elaborate and expensive tools of the blacksmith's trade for which he would seldom, or never, have use. If ever he needs a new spear or hoe he will, by buying or bartering, [437] obtain it from the local smith, or—as is more likely in [439] these modern days—make his way to the nearest Arab

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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or Greek merchant and purchase one imported from England.

The most important and busiest months in the Shilluk year are those of the rainy season, from June to November. When the first rains fall, the villagers go out to prepare their fields for planting. The main plantations are generally at a considerable distance from the village, sometimes as much as ten miles inland; the small patches of maize and millet around the villages, usually cultivated by the women, are for a quick crop that can be used as soon as it is ripe. After the first few showers the grass is burnt and the ashes left to be washed into the soil. When enough rain has fallen to soften the ground, planting begins. There is no preliminary back-breaking hoeing or digging; the Shilluk would regard as crazy anyone who would suggest that such a thing was necessary or would improve the land. He would say that if the rains are good and all other circumstances favourable to growth, he will get enough grain to last him for the year, whereas if fortune is adverse, all the digging in the world will not fill his store basket. What was good enough for his fathers away back to the time of Nyikang is good enough for him; why should he try to improve on the wisdom of the ancients? If this particular patch was sufficient for his father and his father's father, why should he go to the trouble of clearing another? One of the Fathers in Lul, an expert and enthusiastic farmer, tried to convert the schoolboys to a better system of farming by showing them the benefits of digging and manuring the land. He divided an area of ground into two equal parts, planting one half according to the Shilluk and the other according to his own improved method; yet even the sight of the bumper crop that he obtained failed to impress the boys: it was not the Shilluk way of doing things and therefore not for them. And so, the husbandman with a sharp pointed stick removes a small divot from the unbroken surface, drops in a few millet seeds and pushes back the soil with his heel as he moves on. When the whole field has been sown in this manner, he is content to sit back and leave the rest to the beneficence of Nyikang,

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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of sand carriers fully employed; half a dozen more, to their greater disgust, are given picks and sent to dig out the foundations of the new buildings, and of the remainder some are led to the site for the new huts and put to work to clean up the ground so that the foundations can be marked out, and others given the job of making and puddling mud for the replastering of the present mud buildings.

Now commences a period of unceasing activity on the part of the missionary. There are some seventy workmen employed in four different parts of the mission estate, and, except for the brickmakers who are paid a set price for every thousand bricks, each and every one of them is only too ready to steal away and fold his hands and close his eyes in repose as soon as the boss's back is turned. He, poor harassed man, has become the complete Pooh-Bah of the building industry; he must act as architect, general contractor, storekeeper, clerk of works, foreman, timekeeper and cashier, and at the same time keep the mission running normally. He does not forget his priestly duties, and so he is up long before the dawn to say his Mass and have as much as possible of his Office said before he goes out at 6 a.m. to call the roll and start the men on their day's work. He returns to the house to bolt his breakfast, but before he has finished, there are half a dozen outside clamouring for attention. A wheel has come off a water cart, and the crew, never dreaming of putting it back themselves and finding a nail to hold it in place, but only too happy to have a legitimate excuse to sit down and do nothing, are doing just that. He slaps it back into place on the axle, secures it with a bolt and nut and scares the watermen into actually galloping off towards the river. A brickmaker has broken his mould and that requires a little carpentry and a few new screws. A digger complains that he can't find his shovel, is led firmly to the tool shed and falls over the missing article as he enters the doorway. A crowd of people has gathered at the back of the house and the number is increasing as more people come from the villages carrying poles or hanks of grass rope for sale. Each pole and hank has to be inspected, its value appraised and paid for on the spot.

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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forest is too far away to make wood carrying from there an economical proposition, so he has to fall back on what resources the mission can offer. A squad goes off armed with saws and axes to attack the leafy avenue of trees which line the road to the river. The operation is euphemistically called 'pruning', but by the time it is completed and the Father's wood hunger is satisfied, the trees present a sad and sorry appearance. However, they will recover, and anyhow he can't afford to shed a sentimental tear over their appearance with sixty thousand bricks yet at stake.

With the breaking down of the brick kiln, revealing the rows of lovely bricks, those on the top and sides baked a golden brown, and the centre ones red and blue, the real work of the season begins; the rebuilding of the Sisters' convent and the erection of the new schoolrooms and the teacher's house. This is a task beyond the amateur capabilities of our Pooh-Bah, but expert assistance is at hand. One of the Prefecture staff is an authority on building, and he, accompanied by a Brother, arrives on the postboat, having been snatched from his labours in some other mission to start the work here. Scaffolding is erected round the dangerous wall and with consummate skill the expert directs the operation of pulling down the wall in sections, planning to rebuild one portion before passing on to the destruction and rebuilding of the next. The Brother meanwhile is setting out the foundations of the other buildings. The Reverend man-of-all-work, however, has little time to pause and admire such dexterity, for the unceasing daily round still claims his attention. The second kiln is nearing completion, and must be fired as soon as possible, and the first one, now being rapidly demolished, has to be rebuilt with the remaining mud bricks, about another thirty thousand, and fired again. He is still a one-man purchasing board for the produce of the district, but now the grass rope and millet stalks have given way to bundles of grass for thatching and the work of thatching the new huts and some of the old ones has already started.

So far, apart from minor hitches, accidents and squabbles,